

**BLACK WALNUT** (*Juglans nigra*)

FLOWERS: April - May

DESCRIPTION: Leaves alternate, compound. 13 - 25 leaflets, top smooth, bottom downy. Male catkins droop, female flowers on spikes. Walnut Family.

HABITAT: Rich woods, base of slopes, valleys, streams, open woods, old fields

LOCATION: Statewide

COLLECTION: October - December

USES: Nuts, pie, bread, butter, pickle, candy, cookie

91



Anything that can stain as fiercely as walnut hulls must be protecting something precious or valuable inside. And, indeed, that is the case.

Black walnuts have a strong taste not pleasing to everyone. Personally, I find the nut positively delicious. I enjoy them fresh or used in baking.

Fudge candy, using black walnuts, is luscious. Remarkable Black Walnut Fudge is made by cooking 4 cups sugar, a 14½ oz. can evaporated milk, and ½ cup oleo to a softball stage. Add 12 oz. chocolate chips, 1 pint marshmallow cream, 1 t vanilla, and 1 cup black walnuts. Beat until the chips and marshmallow cream

are blended into the sugar mixture. Pour onto greased 13x9x2 pan. Cool and cut into squares.

Another tasty change is to use your favorite cookie recipe with black walnuts added.

I remember my folks would dump a couple bushels of black walnuts on the ground and drive back and forth with the car to mash the hulls. Then the nuts were left for a few days to dry out before collecting. Whether you try that method, or squash each nut individually with your foot and peel the hull off, be sure to wear gloves. The stain is indelible and wears off only in time. I understand that women used the hulls to dye their hair. I wonder how they kept the dye off their scalp, forehead and neck?

92 The nut is hard and difficult to crack. Using a hammer on a cement step or brick, give the nut a good crack and place shell and nut in a pie tin. Then, by using a nut picker, sort and pick out the meats.

A delicious walnut soup (enough for four small servings) is made by bringing 2 cups of chicken stock and 2 cups of Chardonnay or other dry white wine to a boil. Add 1 diced shallot, 1 tablespoon whipping cream, 2 teaspoons tarragon, ½ teaspoon thyme, and a dash of any or part of the following spices: salt, celery salt, cayenne pepper, white pepper, onion powder, dry mustard, fennel seeds, paprika, oregano, sage, and coriander. Boil for 4-6 minutes. Whisk in chilled butter (½ stick), a tablespoon at a time. Add ¾ cup toasted black walnut meats, ½ teaspoon each of garlic powder and parsley. This soup is good either hot or cold.

For pecan pie fans, substitute black walnuts for the pecans. It is different but still tantalizingly good. I prefer small pastry tarts filled with the black walnut pie filling. Heat your oven to 375 degrees. Beat 3 eggs, 2/3 cup sugar, ½ t salt, 1/3 cup melted butter, and 1 cup corn syrup with a mixer. Add ¾ cup black walnuts. Pour into pie shell or pastry tarts and bake for 40-50 minutes. A variation called Spicy Walnut Raisin Pie calls for the above recipe with these additions: ½ t cinnamon, ½ t nutmeg, ½ t cloves and ½ cup raisins.

Indians extracted oil by boiling the walnuts in large kettles and skimming off the oil from the top. They made butter from this oil.

Nut bread, be it banana, pumpkin, persimmon, etc., is enhanced with black walnuts. I have a pan waiting to be picked. I like these strong-tasting elegant morsels!!



**HICKORY** (SHAGBARK,  
*Carya ovata*)  
(SHELLBARK, *Carya*  
*laciniosa*)

FLOWERS: April - May

DESCRIPTION: Alternate,  
compound leaves. Gray  
bark, strips curve away.  
Hairy male catkins,  
female flower on short  
spike. SHAGBARK, 5  
leaflets, 8 - 14";  
SHELLBARK, 7 - 9  
leaflets, 1 - 2". Walnut  
Family.

93

HABITAT: Shellbark: river  
banks. Shagbark in low-  
land or upland woods,  
slopes, dry upland areas

LOCATION: Shagbark, state-  
wide; Shellbark, absent  
in Ozark region

COLLECTION: Fall

USES: Nuts

Missouri is the home of the world's largest shellbark hickory. Big Oak Tree State Park boasts of one with a circumference of 12 feet 9 inches and a height of 122 feet!

I feel the nuts of these two trees are bettered only by the pecan. They must be collected in the fall and if you beat the squirrels to these delectable goodies you've performed no small feat!! One year I had my shagbark staked out, watched the abundant fruit crop grow, only to be outwitted by the squirrels who stripped both the tree and the ground of all good nuts. An ultimate blow to my ego is the fact that this saga has been sung more than once!

The nuts may be used in nut breads, pies, cookies or any recipe calling for nuts. They are particularly good in a cookie recipe called Sandies. Cream 1 cup butter,  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup powdered sugar. Add 2 t vanilla, 1 T water and 2 cups flour. Mix well and add 1 cup hickory nuts. Shape into small balls and bake on an ungreased cookie sheet for 20 minutes in a 300-degree oven. Roll in powdered sugar while hot.

Another yum yum is Hickory Nut Pie. Merely use your favorite pecan pie recipe, or the one for walnuts on page 92, and substitute hickory nuts.

94 A friend of mine is convinced that all foods are improved with the addition of either mushrooms or nuts. With this in mind I tried Angier's recipe for Hickory Nuts Corn. Whip two eggs, add 1 t salt, 1 T flour, 1 cup hickory nuts, 1 cup milk, 2 cups corn (fresh, frozen, or canned). Bake in a greased casserole at 350 degrees until mixture is firm. By golly, nuts do improve corn!!! Next I'm going to try Hickory Nut Meatballs, Hickory Nut Dumplings, Hickory Nut Broccoli, Hickory nut ... NUTS! I ran out of hickory nuts!!



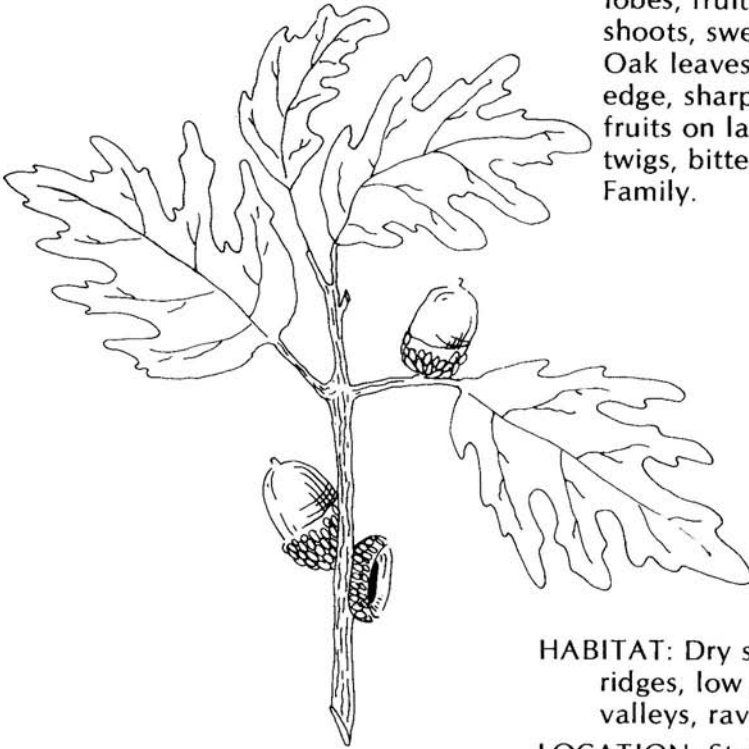
## WHITE OAK, ACORNS

(*Quercus* .. species)

FLOWERS: April - May

DESCRIPTION: Leaves of White Oaks, rounded lobes, fruits on newest shoots, sweet. Black Oak leaves, bristle edge, sharp points; fruits on last year's twigs, bitter. Beech Family.

95



HABITAT: Dry slopes, ridges, low ground of valleys, ravine bottoms

LOCATION: Statewide

COLLECTION: Fall

USES: Nuts, breadstuff

Acorns are a Missouri commodity one is not likely to have trouble locating. Knowing it would be a ready source of supply, I tackled the fruit of the oak trees.

I gathered the acorns from the white oak, which I had read were sweet kernels. One small raw taste was extremely discouraging. If this is sweet, my taste buds had just been fooled!! Another

bite, this time even smaller, made me decide I had the fruit of a bitter black oak. Closer checking in the Missouri Department of Conservation book, *Trees of Missouri*, let me know I indeed had the sweet white oak acorn.

96 Gibbons suggested that I boil the shelled acorns for two hours and change the water every time it looked tea-colored. This I did, along with keeping a pot boiling for instant boiling water baths. There is less likelihood of "setting" the bitter quality when the nuts do not get plopped in cold water and brought back to a boil. Therefore, boiling water is added to the meats as the old is poured off. Gibbons also says that the meats turn a chocolate brown and have no trace of bitterness. Anxious to see if all the unpleasant taste had been removed, I plopped an acorn in my mouth. By the time I finished spitting out the nut, I was ready to leave the edible for the squirrels! Considering the time I had spent picking, shelling, and boiling, I knew I had to continue. I boiled a bit longer and followed Fernald and Kinsey's advice and soaked them in changes of cold water for 2 - 3 days. Some of the nuts I roasted in a 250-degree oven for an hour. By this time, my taste buds were becoming gun shy. However, it's getting better!! A glaze is made from 1 cup sugar, ½ cup water, and a dash of cream of tarter and salt that comes to a boil. Dip the whole acorns in the liquid with tongs or tweezers and cool on wax paper.

The raw acorn kernels, when ground and mixed with boiling water, make a meal to be used in bread, muffins, or pancakes. The mixture is put in a jelly bag and the water squeezed out. This must be repeated several times to take out the bitterness. Put the thinly-spread meal on a cake pan or cookie sheet and bake in a slow oven until thoroughly dried. Regrind and try in your own recipe. Your regular cornbread recipe should be fine. My usual recipe is 1¾ cup white flour, ¼ cup acorn meal, ¼ cup sugar, 4 t baking powder, ½ t salt, 1 egg, 1 cup milk, ¼ cup shortening. Bake in a greased pan at 425 degrees for 20 - 25 minutes.

My appreciation for our early colonizers has heightened considerably!!



**HACKBERRY** (*Celtis occidentalis*)

FLOWERS: April - May

DESCRIPTION: Elm-like leaves, long pointed tips. Trunk gray, warty in appearance. Elm Family.

HABITAT: Low woods, rich bottomlands

LOCATION: Statewide

COLLECTION: After frost

USES: Fruit

97

My experience has been a failure. I have located several hackberry trees, one quite large. I consistently checked the large tree for fruits. I never found any. Fernald and Kinsey tell me that the fruits remain on the tree all winter and were used by the Dakota Indians. They are reported as having the flavor of dates.

Ah, well, perhaps next year!!!!

Next year I found them abundantly! They are small with a thick hide, large seed (for their size), and a small amount of sweet pulp.

Since my initial probe into wild edibles, I have found the hackberry often. The purplish-black berries do dangle on the tree all winter and provide a welcome nibble to passing hikers. The sweet taste of the fruit reminds us that the tree is also known as sugarberry.

The Dakota Indians were said to make a seasoning from the dried stones of the fruit.

**MULBERRY, RED** (*Morus rubra*)

FLOWERS: April - May

DESCRIPTION: A small tree;  
heart-shaped leaves,  
coarsely toothed;  
bark of older trees elm-  
like. Mulberry Family.

HABITAT: Rich woods, open  
rocky places, roadsides,  
fields, pastures

LOCATION: Statewide

COLLECTION: May - July

USES: Jelly, pie, fruit, drink,  
wine, vegetable



98

Fruit-laden mulberry trees are all over Missouri and very few people care about picking them. The red fruit is still green while the ripe berries are a purplish color. The mulberry, to my taste, is a very mild or bland flavor, but the berries are good for jellies. A straight mulberry pie is improved by adding lemon peel, finely grated, or substituting half of the berries with either blackberries or raspberries. This may be obtained by freezing either or both supplies as the berries do not often ripen at the same times. The results are quite good, however. Fill the pie crust with a layer of mulberries, a layer of either blackberries or raspberries, and repeat. Over the fruit sprinkle 1 cup sugar, 2 T flour,  $\frac{1}{2}$  t salt, and top with several pats of butter. Put on a top crust and bake for 45 minutes, or until brown, in a 375-degree oven.



The dried berry may be substituted for raisins or figs. To dry the berries, place them on a screen in a warm attic, or put them in an oven on "warm" with the door ajar for 15 hours or more. They may then be used in cakes, pies or muffins. My favorite use of the dried mulberry is in Mulberry Muffins. Blend the following: 2 cups flour (or substitute 1 cup for reindeer lichen, cattail pollen, etc.), ½ cup brown sugar, 4 t baking soda, 1½ t salt, 2 eggs, 1 cup milk, ½ cup liquid shortening, ½ cup dried mulberries, nuts if desired. Bake at 425 degrees for 20 - 25 minutes.

A surprisingly good drink is made from mulberry juice, lemon juice, sugar, Seven-Up and ice. The trick is in acquiring the mulberry juice while keeping the stain off your hands. I use the blender, a colander and a tea strainer and do a fair job.

Ben Harris has suggested a recipe worth trying if you are interested in making a mulberry wine. Gather berries and allow to dry for a day. Squeeze out the juice and to each gallon of juice, add a gallon of hot water, lemon peels to taste, and a small amount of cinnamon and sassafras bark. Over low heat, bring to a boil and continue for thirty minutes. For each gallon of liquid, add ¾ cup sugar and a pint of yellow wine. Let this set for a week, strain and cap. 99

A liqueur made from mulberries may be had by half filling a bottle with cleaned mulberries. Add either raw sugar or a cup of dissolved granulated sugar. Fill the remaining portion of the bottle with rum or bourbon and stash the bottle away for several months, at least three but the longer the better. Strain the contents and cap.

The young, tender shoots and twigs make a passable vegetable when boiled for 20 minutes in salted water and doused with butter — there I go again on the butter dousing!!

An attractive luncheon salad combines mulberries, bananas, peaches, sour cream and cottage cheese. Not only is it tasty, it is easily digested for those who have to watch their food intake.

With all of the uses noted thus far, we can surely do better than to curse the mulberry for its stain on sidewalks and clothes deposited there by the birds. Who says mulberries are for the birds, anyway?

**NETTLES** (*Urticaceae*)

**STINGING NETTLE,  
FALSE NETTLE**

(*Boehmeria cylindrica*)

**WOOD NETTLE**

(*Laportea canadensis*)

**TALL NETTLE** (*Urtica  
dioica*)

**CLEARWEED** (*Pilea  
pumila*)

FLOWERS: May - September

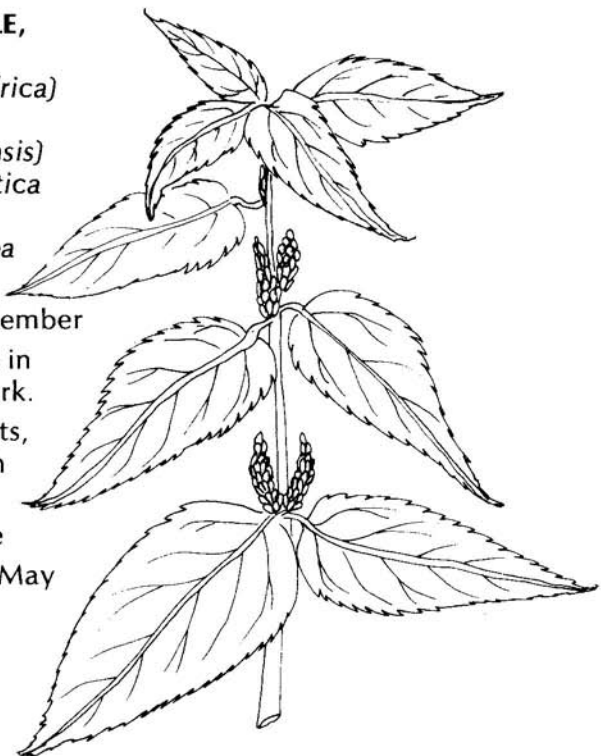
DESCRIPTION: Varies in  
species. Steyermark.

HABITAT: Rich thickets,  
roadsides, rubbish  
heaps

LOCATION: Statewide

COLLECTION: April - May

USES: Potherb



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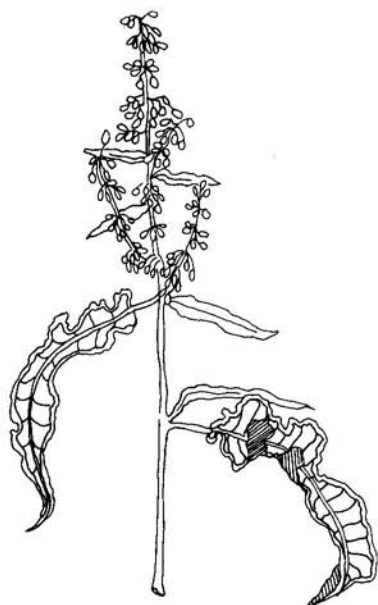
**CAUTION:** Handling this plant can cause dermatitis.  
See page 213.

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This might well win the title of "the most unlikely plant to be eaten." It is a hairy plant that causes a stinging sensation when it rubs against exposed ankles, legs, or any skin. To look at the attacked area shows several welt-like, insect bites. Who would ever suspect this nuisance not to be hazardous to one's innards!!!!?

Although care must be taken in picking the nettles by using gloves and snippers, once this is washed and cooked or steamed it loses its defense and becomes a mild-mannered potherb. You should pick the shoots when they are not more than 6" to 8" tall. Cook for a few minutes and add butter.

The fibers of this plant are suggested to be the equal of flax for linen and the roots produce a yellow dye.



**DOCK** (*Rumex* .. various species)

**SOUR or YELLOW**

**DOCK** (*Rumex crispus*)

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**CAUTION:** Handling this plant causes dermatitis in some people. See page 215.

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**PALE DOCK** (*Rumex altissimus*)

**SWAMP DOCK** (*Rumex verticillatus*)

**PATIENCE DOCK** (*Rumex patientia*)

101

**FLOWERS:** April - May

**DESCRIPTION:** Large 6" - 12" leaves, most basal. Leaves on stem have paper sheath surrounding stem at attachment. Tall inflorescence of tiny flowers. Buckwheat Family.

**HABITAT:** Fields, gardens, waste ground, railroads, streams, ponds

**LOCATION:** Common species statewide

**COLLECTION:** March - April, shoots; July - Winter, seeds

**USES:** Potherb

Steyermark lists some 13 species of dock found in Missouri. To save my being confused I have discovered that all of the young leaves are edible as a spinach substitute. Dock is used with poke, lamb's quarters, wild lettuce and dandelion to make a mess of spring greens. Unlike many of the greens that cook away, most dock holds its bulk. Most potherbs are cooked in two hot water baths and seasoned with salt, pepper, butter and vinegar.

Although I have not tried to make a meal from the dock seeds, I have read that western Indian tribes used the seeds in such a manner.